

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS, POLITICAL CAPACITY
AND INDIA'S STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Rural development policy in Asian countries appears to be determined by the following three primary goals: (a) raising agricultural productivity; (b) raising community solidarity; and (c) institutionalization of equality. A country/attempt to achieve all /can the three goals or any combination of the two simultaneously but as dilemmas with regard to incompatibility of these develop, goals come to be organized on a hierarchical basis. Thus, at a particular period of time a specific policy may be designed to achieve one single goal and allow the other goals to be comparatively neglected. How a government resolves these dilemmas and establishes its priority of goals constitutes its strategy of rural development.

The realisation of a particular primary goal and the pursuit of any appropriate strategy is dependent upon the development of a host of other instrumentally appropriate policy and programme choices. They are concerned with making appropriate strategic interventions in the rural areas which result in the achievement of the primary goal. Thus, the type of programmes through which a country chooses to intervene in rural society is implied in the choice of its primary

goal. And it is the choice of the primary goal and of the type of interventions that determine the policy model of rural development for a government.¹

The purpose of this study is to examine critically the policy model chosen by the Government of India in the area of rural development. We propose to evaluate the effect of the Government programmes on the village communities and to analyse the degree to which they have been able to achieve their stated objectives.

The focus of our attention will be the institutions that the government has sought to create in order to transform the rural scene. We are assuming that besides the existing socio-economic structure of the rural community, the second most important intermediate variable determining the impact of government policies on rural development is its own mobilizational and administrative capacity. However, we recognize that this mobilizational and administrative capacity cannot be analysed in isolation of the state of the rural community. Therefore, for purposes of this paper critical and descriptive attention will be devoted to the mobilizational and administrative capacity of the government to implement the policy model and relevant aspects of the agrarian structure will be

brought in only to examine this capability and place it in its proper perspective. Keeping this focus, land reform policies, which are meant primarily to change the agrarian structure, have been kept out of our discussion though we realize they are part of the total package employed to transform the rural sector.

Before discussing and analysing specific policies, it may be useful to describe briefly (a) the policy making environment; and (b) the administrative environment in which these rural policies are sought to be implemented.

II

POLICY - MAKING ENVIRONMENT

Constitutionally, India has a federal form of government wherein a conscious effort has been made to define the area of policy formulation between the Centre and the States. Clear listing of powers has been made through the Central list, State list, and the Concurrent list in the Indian Constitution. The way the federal system actually works, however, depends not only on the directions given by the Supreme Court in interpreting the Constitution² but also on the bargains struck by the political forces operating in the country at a given period of time.³

The Union has enjoyed wide powers for formulating policies both in the general area of economic and social planning and ⁱⁿ the individual sectors of the economy. In the particular case of rural development, innovative policies have generally been articulated by the leadership at the central level even though 'Agriculture and Rural Development' is a state subject. It has usually prepared guidelines for the strategy of change and determined the pattern of programmes that will implement it. In many cases, the implementation of programmes involve both the Centre and the States and the two jointly share the responsibility for results. The Community Development Programme is one example of the frequently observed arrangements wherein the States have enacted their specific laws to usher in these new institutional framework while the Centre has not only determined the institutional framework but also kept initial control and regulation of the programme through grant of funds. Total management of these agencies is taken over completely by the States only when the Centre so desires.

The result of such an arrangement is that to sustain a scheme, the centre and the states must keep up their interest in it. The scheme can be maintained by Centres' interest if it continues to give it financial grants. So long as the

resources of the centre are forthcoming, it is to the benefit of the state to keep up its interest in form atleast if not in substance. This means, that more often than not, the involvement of the states may be determined by the quantum of funds it is going to receive from the centre and not necessarily by the acceptance of the objectives of rural development by national leadership. Consequently the states give great importance to the bureaucratic paraphernalia that has to be installed in order to see that funds keep flowing in and often ignore the objectives for which it has been set up.

This leads to a strange situation. The centre is free to articulate a radical policy and allocate funds for its implementation and the states, on the other hand, accept the funds without being constrained to fulfill the objectives of the policy. Institutional arrangements exist however to involve both the Centre and the states in policy formulation. For purposes of determining developmental policies a National Development Council has been set up. The First Five Year Plan said, "In a country of the size of India where the states have under the constitution, full autonomy within their sphere of duties, it is necessary to have a forum such as a National Development Council at which, from time to time, the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of states can

review the working of the plan and its various aspects.⁴ In these meetings, however, the states, by and large, accept the proposals enunciated by the Prime Minister and his colleagues⁵ and do not show any sharp disagreement with policy issues. The fact that the same party, the Congress, rules both at the centre and most states and the fact that centre commands resources which can be used to satisfy states' demands has considerable influence on determining the posture adopted by the states.

This consensus then fails to percolate down to the states for yet another significant reason. The character of the leadership at the centre and the states has been motivated by different needs. During the independence movement, leaders had committed themselves to changed rural structure by radically transforming the land relations. Steep inequalities and extreme poverty in the villages were seen specifically stemming from the unequal size of land-holdings, unfavourable systems of tenancy and the exploitative hold of the powerful over the farmer through various aspects of jajmani system.⁶ In order to develop a wider base of political support to oust the British from the country, radical promises of reform were given. During the post independence era, the national leadership at the centre has been involved in fulfilling these pledges.

But the type of leadership that emerged in the states tended to negate the promises held out. For in the states, the controlling political forces are dominated by powerful landed interests. As will be shown later, the policies for bringing democracy to the local level strengthened the very forces against whom the policies of rural change were directed. State legislatures have a larger membership from the rural agricultural class and they see to it that legal enactments are weak or so vague that they cannot be effectively implemented.⁷

The result has been that because the states are autonomous in their own sphere, the centre has only been able to establish general guidelines and seek broad agreements on objectives of change. This has often led to a considerable gap between what the centre wants to do and what actually gets done. However, it is not always that the centre is really interested in getting its own ideas implemented. Over time, pressures are building up at the national level also which are similar to the developments in the states. In the national parliament, representatives of the landed interests have continued to grow from 19% in the First Parliament to more than 33% in the Fifth.⁸ Probably, a consequence of this has been lesser interest in the aims of rural equality.

In concluding this section, let us emphasize the fact that unique problems, have been created because the subject of agriculture and rural development is in the states sphere under the federal system. What the centre can or cannot do depends to a great extent on what the states want or do not want to do. The wishes of the states are governed by the extent of financial support that can be mustered from the centre and by the character of their own leadership. In many cases, policies merely become instruments for embellishing the image of the policy making elite and are not taken seriously.

III.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ENVIRONMENT

Administration and rural development have very close links in India. Governmental policies and programmes have relied heavily on the effectiveness of the administrative system to bring about changes in the rural sector. Even those programmes which depend upon peoples support for their success have been so designed that they cannot succeed unless administrative support and effort is also available. In fact, the Five Year Plans are replete with statements which emphasize the close interdependence of public and administrative support. Great store is set by administrative leadership, administrative guidance and assistance while

stressing the responsibility of the people themselves in improving their own condition. Thus, planners have generally accepted that solutions to rural problems lie in positive governmental action.

Two significant consequences of this reliance on administrative machinery for rural development have emerged. First, rural problems have been looked at from an administrative point of view which has led to structuring and restructuring of the existing administrative set up to fulfill the needs of a particular programme. Second, performance of the policies has depended heavily upon the strengths and weaknesses of the administrative system itself. Thus, the uneven pattern of administrative development throughout the country has in ways determined the irregular path of rural development. Administration, in this sense, is both a strategy as well as means to solve rural problems. The impact of administration on rural development stems not only from the effectiveness of the agencies of implementation but also from the choice of administrative institutions (agencies) to implement particular programmes.

The purpose of this part of the paper is to draw broad contours of the administrative milieu in which rural institutions were set up and on which their success depended.

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One of the most important characteristics of the Indian administration is its system of district administration. It represents one of the oldest and most powerful political institutions in India. It is the product of colonial rule; not only has it been ^{the} pivot but the system of Imperial administration itself.

For many, the district as a unit of administration can be traced back to the early empires of Guptas or Mauryas. In the early past, the Mughals have been credited with devising a system based on delegation of authority to the man on the spot. The empire was divided in subas, sarkars and Parganas. The sarkar was the counterpart of the modern district.

However, the district as we know it today was evolved by the British and was established in its present form at least in some parts of India by 1780. As a territorial unit, the size of the district has varied sharply from one region to another. Some of the larger districts are almost of 10,000 square miles. The population also varies from 4 million to half a million. Apart from this variance in size, the districts are a mix of rural urban complex.

Mainly because of the large size of districts, there are several tiers in its administrative set up. Firstly, there is one level which covers the entire district. At this level, there is the Collector, Superintendent of Police,

District Medical & Health Officer and a number of other district level officers. At an intermediate level district is usually split up into a number of sub-divisions, tehsils and talukas. In many departments there is a sub-divisional officer below the district officer, who is in charge of a smaller territorial unit, the sub-division. There is, for example, the Sub-Divisional Officer of the Revenue department and Deputy Superintendent of Police etc., The Sub-division may or may not be coterminous with the tehsil or taluka; if it is not, then sub-division is further subdivided into Tehsils or Talukas. The tehsil or Taluka is placed under a Tehsildar or Mamlatdar. At the lowest level, is the village itself where the revenue official is known as the Patwari.

The purposes of district administration are manifold. Khera, in describing them and in analysing the major principles underlying their application, has mentioned that the first and foremost purpose of district administration is to maintain law and order. It holds absolute priority over all other purposes. "It means quite simply that law and order claims, and rightly claims, absolute priority of attention by the district administration, above every-thing else."

The second purpose of district administration is to assess and collect land revenue and other taxes. The third purpose of district administration is to administer land. The fourth purpose is to administer various other control and

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executive functions of government, e.g. control of prices of essential commodities, administration of evacuee property; conduct of national, state and local elections etc. The fifth purpose of district administration is to take immediate action to relieve district in case of calamity or disaster such as flood, drought, epidemic or famine.

The sixth and last purpose is to promote the positive progress and welfare of the people of the district. During the British days, this usually occupied the last priority, though welfare of the people living in a district was not merely incidental to or outside of district administration even during those days.

The district administration in performing these tasks was composed of various functionaries. The District Collector was at the head of the district combining with him both executive as well as magistracy powers. In his law and order functions he was supported by superintendent of police whose organisation also worked at each level of district hierarchy. Apart from these two, the district administration had a number of technical officers like Principal Medical and Health Officer, District Agricultural Officer, Executive Engineer etc.

The preeminent position in the administration of the district was occupied by the Collector. He was the government for the people; around him the entire administration of the area revolved. The importance with which his role was seen by the British government can be seen from the following

minute of Sir Fitzjames Stephens writing in 1872:

"It seems to me that the first principle which must be borne in mind is, that the maintenance of the position of the District Officer is absolutely essential to the maintenance of British rule in India, and any diminution in their influence and authority over the natives will be dearly purchased even by an improvement in the administration of justice. Within their own limits, and as regards the population of their own districts, the District officers are the government and they ought, I think, to continue to be so. 10

This emphasis on the preeminent position of the District Collector not only within his own area but also in dealing with local people and problems on behalf of the Government led to many attitudinal and behavioural consequences. The orientation of the civil servants serving as District Collectors were dominated by the ethos demanded in the district. The entire ICS, the civil service manning such posts, bore the imprint of the influences generated at the district level.

The Indian Civil Service which really ruled the country was a closely knit group often referred to as the "steel frame". It was a highly select cadre which allowed Indians into its fold only after the First World War. All the senior positions in government were held by them, including those of the District Collector. Braibanti has pointed out that among the foremost characteristics of the ICS tradition, which dominated the ethos of bureaucracy were the assumptions of Platonic guardianship and of being men of superior virtue. 12

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In practice what this really meant was that they believed in their own superiority over the masses and took upon themselves the monopoly of understanding and providing for public good. This belief manifested itself in "mai baap" administration wherein they assumed the role of parents and guardians of the population. This automatically led to a sense of distrust towards non-bureaucratic institutions that were willing to share in the responsibilities for public welfare or in defining what was in public interest. A feeling of monopoly of virtue was thus further generated.

Together with this orientation, a premium was placed on quick decisions, independent and firm action, not unlike the field military administration.¹³ Memories of former ICS officers are replete with romantic descriptions of their decision making abilities exercised sometimes in most difficult circumstances. Independence and impartiality were the cherished goals and many a district officer prided himself in having disagreed with his secretariat colleagues.¹⁴

Finally, as pointed out earlier, maintenance of law and order enjoyed absolute priority among the ICS.¹⁵ The ICS officer, in charge of his district, considered internal peace crucial to good administrationⁱⁿ his area. His esteem among his group depended largely on how he performed his duties in this sphere. Lack of initiative or lack of judgement in face of an unruly mob or failure to exercise

authority to quell a riot were the most despised qualities an officer could possess.

Thus the heritage of the present day administrators," consisted primarily of two types of functional orientations, "that in exercising imperial authority maintenance of law and order enjoyed absolute priority attention and that members of the ICS were responsible and considered themselves responsible to themselves."¹⁶ Structurally, the heritage also consisted of the district as a unit of administration.

After independence, structure of administration as well as of civil service has remained more or less intact. One would agree with Braibanti, that "reform in administration has been based on modifying the system rather than abandoning it."¹⁷ Thus, the study Team on District Administration of the Administrative Reforms Commission suggests: "As a result of our survey of the existing pattern of District administration, we have generally come to the conclusion that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with it. The system has stood the test of time, and even though it was basically designed to meet the colonial needs of the British, it can continue to serve the needs of a welfare state also."¹⁸ Little effort has been made to rationalise the work procedure or method or to relate the whole administrative strategy to the New demands of the rural situation.

Similarly, the Indian Civil Service of the pre-independence era has been transformed into the Indian Administrative Service while retaining the essential characteristics of the old. Tinker has elaborated these various features of the structural legacy: open entry based on academic achievement, elaborate training arrangements, permanency of tenure, responsible generalists posts at central, state and district levels reserved for the elite cadres alone, a regular graduated scale of pay with pensions and other benefits and a system of promotions and frequent transfers based predominantly on seniority and partly on merit.¹⁹

Apart from these characteristics, the IAS also maintained its elite characteristics. With respect to social background of post-independence recruits, no sharp discontinuity is noted. "It can be said with certainty that there has been no revolutionary displacement of one type of elite by a radically different type of elite. We find instead the same type of person, with the same type of education, from more or less same background joining the elite cadre now as before independence."²⁰ Similarly, like the ICS, the IAS by and large continued to be a distinctly separate entity not only by its very nature of elitist selection but by its

being Western oriented and English-speaking. This distinction is enhanced when the society is bifurcated between "the secular minded western oriented and English speaking and the public mass religion oriented, tradition oriented and vernacular speaking."²¹ In another sense also, the IAS continues to enjoy the elite status. In 1964, out of a total of nine million government employees in India, only about .0002 per cent were from the IAS. The total cadre strength as of 1970 was 3207. It is these few persons in that sense who hold key positions throughout the bureaucracy and determine policies and programmes of implementation.

In terms of rural administration, the major discussion was whether such type of a civil service which had been devised to meet colonial needs was adequate to meet the challenges of development. Nehru proclaimed, "I am quite sure that no new order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of the ICS pervades our administration and our public services. That spirit of authoritarianism cannot co-exist with freedom. Therefore, it seems essential that the ICS and similar services must disappear completely as such before we can start real work on a new order."²² However, in spite of what Nehru said, his strategy of development put further prestige on the shoulders of administration. Without changing the essential structure, the demands of shift to

new orientation grew. Particularly in reference to rural development, the intricacies of the new assignment were spelt out in greater detail. The administrators were told that the administrative orientation must shift completely from making decisions and giving orders to helping the people make decisions.

G.B. Pant, a former Home Minister of India, pointed out that officials cannot work with an attitude of condescension towards the villagers as

"superstitious men who deserve contempt" for

of "To serve the villagers you have to identify yourself with rural life; to find joy in the air you breathe and consciousness of the fact you are engaged in the act of building a new society. You have to train people in the art of life and in the art of living. You have to see that they move, they move onward and they are not pushed onward artificially. Let them learn the art which will enable them to secure for themselves what we want them to possess. Unless you try to influence without imposing something from above, your success will be short lived." 24

The officials were told to identify themselves with the villagers. "You have to work in the filth and cowdung and out of it create a clear and wholesome atmosphere." 25

This is the administrative milieu in which the dominant structural characteristic is that of continuity from the British days and the preeminent behavioural demand is of change in ethos and orientation that provides

us the setting in which governmental agencies of rural development function. It also provides us with a paradoxical situation in which administration is heavily indicted for its shortcomings in its ability to meet new demands but relied heavily for bringing about radical changes in the countryside.

IV

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ

The first major effort to transform the villages came through the programme of Community Development initiated in the First Five Year Plan in 1952. The roots of community development can be traced to the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi who was associated with various programmes of upliftment of rural masses. His ideas of a 'constructive programme' were expanded by various people who worked upon similar themes. The main ideas in these writings formed the core of a comprehensive village development programme, and they were incorporated to a considerable extent in the present national community development programme.

The community development programme was formally initiated in 1952 as part of the First Five Year Plan. It provided Rs.90 crores for community projects and proposed the establishment over a period of about ten years a network of extension workers throughout the country. As an experimental measure, 55 community projects were initially introduced.

The planners, assumed that Community Development Programme would 'secure increases in agricultural production beyond the targets envisaged by the Plan' for they, stated unmistakably in the Third Plan that, 'the principal test to be met by the community development programme must be its practical effectiveness as an agricultural extension agency'. By harnessing people's participation, the major thrust of the programme was towards increasing agricultural production. The Government was expected to fulfill a two fold role in the programme. On the one hand, it had to supply resources and technical help for the community to develop and on the other hand, to see that this aid is administered so as to generate a steady and independent growth in the rural society.

For this purpose, the Government set up a three tier structure in the district. At the village, a Village Level Worker was appointed who was an all purpose man for the farmer. He was responsible to bring in all the technological innovations to the farmer and induce him to

adopt them. At the Block level, a team of technical extension agents worked under the leadership of Block Development Officer who was responsible for the co-ordination of all development programmes. At the District level, the District Collector assumed the role of District Development and Planning Officer.

The programme was multi-purpose in its nature and was financed by a schematic budget which provided for all aspects of rural development like agriculture, animal husbandary, minor irrigation, rural industries, cooperation, education, health etc.

An elaborate organisation known as Community Project Administration was set up to implement the programme. Originally, it was part of the Planning Commission but later on it was placed with an independent Ministry of Community Development of the Government of India. The entire administration was organised at four hierarchical levels: The Central Administration, the State Administration, the District Organisation and the Block Administration. The power and control flowed from the top to the bottom making it a hierarchic bureaucratic organisation. At every level there was an Executive Officer functioning with a Development Committee. At the Centre was an Administrator, at the state level, Development Commissioner, at the District Level the

Collector working as the District Development Officer with a Deputy specifically responsible for this work and at the Block level, a Block Development Officer.

Upto the district level, the officers concerned with the programme belonged to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The Officer at the base of the hierarchy and the ultimate field functionary was the Block Development Officer. The problem of his recruitment exercised the minds of the planners from the very beginning. But it was fairly early decided that there should not be a separate cadre for the BDOs and the "intention is to transform the existing administrative services into developmental services."

Initially, therefore, members of the State Civil Service or the Indian Administrative Service came on deputation to serve as BDOs. This was sometimes a period of training or sometimes a period of waiting before the bureaucrat was sent up the traditional ladder of hierarchy. Due to various difficulties, this method has since been abandoned.

In attempting, to link the BDO with the State Administration, several other methods were adopted. In a State like Uttar Pradesh a separate civil service cadre, under the control of its Rural Development Department was created. In other states like Rajasthan the use of members of the State Civil Service to man these positions was abandoned around 1968. Blocks have been, by and large classified as agricultural or animal husbandary blocks.

Subject matter specialists in Agriculture and Animal Husbandary have been asked to do a stint as BDOs before being promoted in their respective departmental hierarchies.

The basis on which these institutions were established was the expectation that "local self help village groups will mobilize their natural and human resources for local improvements of all kinds and all technical agencies of government will aid them in this undertaking." The implications of this formulation, as Taylor has argued, was that there would be (i) initiative of people in both formulating and executing programmes (ii) schemes coming up from a large number of voluntary organisations and even primary group, (iii) reliance upon group work techniques; (iv) governmental administrative machinery which would act as an assisting body. The administrators implementing the programme were expected to be equipped with not only administrative and technical skills but also social and behavioural skills evoking voluntary association and community participation.

Most of the scholars evaluating the Community Development Programme found the inadequacy of the governmental machinery itself as the major obstacle to its success. It was by and large accepted that the civil servants were intelligent, hard-working and conscientious people but they

lacked the essential spirit underlying the programme. Too much reliance on government had also not helped in generating people's participation. Dube came to the conclusion that:

"Planning so far appears from the top down. Because of the unique curbs on Projects autonomy, its officials hesitated to demonstrate much initiative. What was worse they tended to accept orders from the state headquarters without question or comment. As an outcome of this trend officials were oriented less towards the village people and more towards pleasing their official superiors." 31

Programme Evaluation Reports also pointed out the inability of the programme to help the economically handicapped classes. They showed that those who were benefitting from the development programmes and improving their economic and social conditions usually belonged to those sections of the villagers who were already somewhat better off than others in the village. 32

However, the major indictment of the Community Development Programme came from the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee which emphasized its inability to evoke popular enthusiasm. According to the report:

"Admittedly, one of the least successful aspects of the C.D. and N.E.S. is its attempt to evoke popular initiative. An attempt has been made to harness local initiative through the formation of adhoc bodies mostly with the nominated personnel and invariably advisory in character. These bodies

have so far given no indication of durable strength nor the leadership necessary to provide the motive force for continuing the improvement of economic and social condition in rural areas. So long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institutions which will supply the local interest, supervision and care necessary to ensure that the expenditure of money upon local objects conforms with the needs and wishes of the locality, invest it with adequate power and assign to it appropriate finances, we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development". 33

Most of the evaluators of the scheme have corroborated these observations. Dube, from his study, has come to even a more negative conclusion when he suggests that the officials termed their judgement about democratic support on the basis of the people that they came into contact with. These people however, did have a special status in the village but did not necessarily represent it. They were either traditional caste leaders or those who belonged to the landowning class. Thus, such contacts between the officials and village leaders instead of developing confidence for the programme among the common villagers alienated them from its aims and objectives. 34

The result of all this criticism was the acceptance of the scheme of democratic decentralisation or Panchayati Raj, as recommended by the Mehta Committee.

Panchayati Raj with its elective institutions was aimed at providing popular support to rural development programmes of the government. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee suggested a three tier structure in which Panchayat at village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block Level and Zila Parishad at district level were established. Members of the village panchayat were elected on the basis of the adult population; after that the presiding officer of the Panchayat became ex-officio member of the Panchayat Samiti whose presiding officer in turn became the ex-officio member of the zilla parishad. This inter-locked nature of membership means that the Panchayati Raj structure has only one entry point, i.e. the Panchayats that form its lowest rung, and, except through cooption the only way to reach the higher echelons was to secure elections at the Panchayat level.³⁵

There has been some variations in the above institutional pattern among the states but by and large the states have accepted the Mehta Committee model. Rajasthan adopted this pattern fully making the block as the focal point of administration and planning. The Zilla Parishad was provided only a supervisory role without even the power of modifying the budget proposals of the Panchayat Samitis. On the other hand,

Maharashtra has made the Zilla Parishad as the most powerful organ of the Panchayati Raj institutions.³⁶

The institutional framework of Panchayati Raj followed the pattern of Community Development scheme. The roles of the District Collector, Block Development Officer, Extension Officers and the Village Level Workers were unaltered. In addition, they were now expected to work with the non-officials too. Thus, the vertical hierarchical pattern of bureaucracy was maintained while a new set of people and institutions were introduced to control and guide them. This adherence to the essence of the administrative framework was emphasized by the Third Plan when it said, "Extension officials at the Block and Village levels, although functioning within the jurisdiction of the Panchayat Samiti form part of a larger administrative and technical network, which extends to the district and even beyond it."³⁷

One of the consequences of this inter-locking web of relationships between the officials of the community development institutions and the non-officials of the Panchayati Raj institutions has been the emergence of friction between the two and their lack of ability to work as a homogenous team.³⁸ The functionaries like the

Sarpanch or the Pradhan (head of Panchayat Samiti in Rajasthan) have attempted to influence the officials to maximize the benefits for their own groups or their own areas. In these efforts, they have been helped by their linkages with state level leadership and their membership of the ruling party. The administrators, on their part, have regented the injection of this kind of leadership and have perceived them as threats to their own power and influence. This mutual hostility has often resulted in lack of concern about achievement of targets and inability to relate programmes to the good of all the people.

The overlapping relationships of Community Development and Panchayati Raj has also led to the confusion in determining administrative boundaries among the various sub-systems within the district. For one thing, the officials have been placed under dual control. For example, the agricultural department provides to the panchayat samiti the agricultural extension officer, compost inspectors and other technical staff needed for agricultural extension programme. These are recruited by the agricultural department, are borne on its cadre and deputed to work in the Panchayat Samitis for specified periods. Then departmental supervisors - district agricultural officers - are concerned primarily with providing technical guidance and other assistance needed by

them in carrying out their extension activities.⁴⁰ Thus the control over the technical staff of the samiti is exercised by Block Development Officer, president of Panchayat Samiti, and the district technical officers of the Government departments.⁴¹

According to Vepa, one of the important consequences of this multiple control system is that district technical officers either exercise too close a control over the extension officers thus undermine the authority of the Samitis president, or what is more frequent, leave the extension officers to themselves who then work without adequate guidance. Coordination between the technical departments and the samitis is minimal; and the responsibility for achieving targets tends to be assumed neither by the Samiti nor by the technical department.⁴² Many extension officers also tend to feel insecure under the control of Panchayat samiti - a political body - which often tends to judge them not so much by their technical competence or efficiency as by the relationship they can establish with the influential members of the body.⁴³ "As a result, the operation of the system depends a great deal on the respective power and skill of the participants, their evaluation of each others intentions and orientations, and even on their personal accommodation."⁴⁴

From the point of view of the farmer too, this has led to some confusion. For it has become difficult to place operative responsibility for a particular task on any single agency. Fertilizer, for example, is distributed through several agencies, like the cooperatives, Block Office etc., but the responsibility for its proper distribution lies with the District Collector. For getting an agricultural loan, the farmer has to deal with both the and the State revenue machinery. Thus, the Panchayati Raj system Panchayati Raj system has to a certain extent strained the 'normal' administrative system which has not been able to meet the new challenges.

Apart from these administrative inconsistencies Panchayati Raj's major contribution has been in the socio-political sphere. The fact that elections with the possibility of gaining access to decision making bodies were brought to the village where traditional leaders uninterruptedly dominated was enough to bring in radical changes in both political processes as well structure. Power has shifted gradually to the groups who were numerically more powerful or has led to formation of new groups that could maintain power. Thus, politics of elections has introduced the game of numbers. It is no longer possible for a numerically small group to hold power unless it generates support to become the majority. However, this has not really meant that those already holding

power have been displaced; but what has resulted is at least the recognition by them that lower caste groups are important if they want to stay in power. On the other hand, the depressed groups have increasingly realized the significance of their vote which has led them to question their role on the periphery of the political system.

However, one should not make very much out of this kind of political revolution. For due to their poverty and depressed social status, the under-privileged have really been kept out of the advantages of democracy and development. Recognition of their bargaining position has not resulted in the crystallization of favourable policies towards them or in getting a better deal from the state.

This inability of the Panchayati Raj system to fulfill the tasks of a political revolution was a consequence of the character of political leadership that emerged from these institutions and the role that the Panchayati Raj bodies played in the larger political system. Contrary to expectations, there was no major or radical shift in the character of the leadership that emerged. There is very little evidence to show that the traditional factors of caste or property are no longer associated with power and leadership. A recent study concludes, "The hold of traditional leaders is complete. These leaders represent the propertied and the privileged groups in the village

society." ⁴⁶ Sirsikar, on the basis of his study conducted in Maharashtra during 1967-68 points out that "The local political system is under the control of a leadership which comes from the rich peasantry with tradition, social status, wealth, and other factors on its side. The hold of the richer peasantry on the whole mechanism of power as it operates at the local level in all fields of life has serious repercussions for both the democratic set up and socialistic goals." ⁴⁷ Similarly, studies in Rajasthan or ⁴⁸ Andhra Pradesh have also come to the same conclusion. Thus, all observers are agreed that the leadership that has emerged can at best be classified as "neo-traditional."

It must, however, be admitted that the impact of Panchayati Raj was really in changing the process of acquiring leadership or positions of power if not in its character. Office holding in panchayati raj bodies was a novel technique of acquiring leadership status in the rural context and logically enough the traditional leader contested for these positions to gain access to power. ⁴⁹ Thus, those very people who had enjoyed power and status because of certain ascriptive qualities had now to go out to seek support to win an election. Thus, Panchayati Raj has introduced some kind of democratization in the rural area and given some confidence to the people to exercise their choices.

Considering this social character of leadership and the impact of democratization, the more important question is related to the role that it has played in furthering the aims of community development. Some observers have even doubted whether the new leaders are development oriented and have argued that Panchayati Raj has helped to develop a cult of power and further assisted the dominant group to strengthen itself. ⁵⁰ Critically examining the provisions of indirect elections of the Mehta Committee, P.C. Mathur has argued that persons who are unfit for superior responsibilities may succeed in securing a passage to the higher by appealing to smaller number of voters on quite minor issues and at the same time candidates, having a District wide perspective may find it very difficult to appeal to the voters at the Panchayat level where local issues or forces may predominate. ⁵¹ An important consequence of this may be the tendency among the aspirants to the Panchayati Raj offices to become more concerned about the local or parochial issues than with secular or modern issues of development.

Looking at this dynamics from the point of view of state level politics, even more serious repercussion has been the links that this leadership has forged with that at the state level. The members of the state assemblies and Parliament quickly realized that to gain rural votes, it was important to win over Panchayati Raj leaders. They controlled

votes and could sway the population in favour of one person or the other. Panchayati Raj became 'vote bank' for political purposes. The result was further watering down of national objectives in favour of local issues. It also meant that local leaders commanded greater influence than hitherto for they could bring into play influence of Members of Legislative Assemblies, Members of Parliament, or State Ministers to resolve local issues.

The picture of Panchayati Raj that emerged in course of its working was the very negation of the ideal that was held by the policy makers. The image in which these institutions were established was a reflection of idealism and the Gandhian concept of Ram Rajya based on self-sufficient, self-dependent village communities. The whole argument of rural development and growth seemed to be raised on to a sublime level of morality and ethics. It was assumed that the villages would be free of any political or social struggles and problems would be solved through general agreement and consensus. Rural life was idealized and entry of politics into this area was sought to be restricted on a moral basis. However, the social political reality predicted otherwise.

Villages were not conflict free but were ridden with group rivalry and factionalism. There are family disputes caste disputes etc. Caste panchayats that existed before were heavily influenced by the dominant group and resolved

conflicts keeping their interests in mind. Introduction of Panchayati Raj brought these conflicts into open and allowed the groups to seek support even from outside the village to fight their point of view. The politicization obviously transformed local or caste issues into political issues⁵¹² which no longer could be solved through consensus. Insistence on consensus in this context really meant maintenance of the power of the dominant group. Thus, despite the idealism and the demands of keeping politics out of panchayati raj, these institutions have helped to crystallize political issues and polarize the village community.⁵³

In concluding this section, it is important to point out that the professed goals of these institutions have begun to recede into background. The Panchayati Raj institutions have not been able to raise their own resources and have increasingly relied on governmental funds. An important consequence of this has been the increasing role of the government in implementing programmes. Rural leadership has seen its role in maximising the benefits of development for their area or their group and not in becoming the enlightened base for the national policy maker talking in terms of social justice and increased agricultural production.

COOPERATIVES AND VILLAGE UPLIFT

In an effort to develop village communities, one aspect of the effort was the initiation of Community Development and Panchayati Ra, the other was the emphasis on the village cooperatives. Various forms of cooperative institutions were in existence in India since several decades but their record had been that of "dismal failure." ⁵⁴ The Five Year Plans in India gave them a new lease of life when it argued that the planned economic and social development in the countryside would take place as far as possible, through the means of cooperatives. The First Five Year Plan pointed out, "As the purpose of the Plan is to change the economy of the country from an individualistic to a socially regulated and cooperative based, its success should be judged, among other things, by the extent to which it is implemented through cooperative organisations." ⁵⁵

The model was that of a multi-purpose cooperative, servicing its members through the supply of credit, agricultural inputs, storage facilities, marketing assistance etc. In practice however, the cooperatives have mainly come to be associated with supply of rural credit and only lately agricultural inputs. Apart from seeing them as business propositions and doing what an individual could not do, the cooperatives were also seen as a method of mobilizing the people towards self help and village management. It was also

assumed that cooperatives would be able to help the rural poor and others who are unable to take credit to improve their farm practices or who are kept out of development benefits because of the dominance of the traditional caste groups and land owners. To a great extent, therefore, cooperative credit programmes were initiated to protect the weaker sections from the exploitation by the money lender and also in the process help them through greater ⁵⁶ availability of credit to increase agricultural production.

Accepted policy envisages that there should be an Apex Cooperative Bank in each state, a central cooperative bank for each district and viable primary credit societies at the base to cover all the villages. Each higher level institution is to be a federation of those below. Thus, a vast network of village cooperative societies has been created. In two national scale studies undertaken by the National Institute of Community Development, Hyderabad, it was found that over 90% of the village surveyed had a cooperative society of one type or the other, either located within their boundaries or within a distance of five miles from them. ⁵⁷ Between 1955-56 and 1967-68 the All India average of loans advanced per society increased from Rs. 30,102 to Rs. 23,184 and the average membership per society from ⁵⁸ 49 to 162.

However, despite all these advances, the Cooperative movement has failed to fulfill the hopes placed in it. The weaker sections of the society, whose need for their services is most urgent, have suffered most where these institutions have failed and did not stand to gain where they proved successful.⁵⁹

In this failure, one responsibility has been on the kind of policy that has been evolved. Cooperative loans have generally been given on the basis of land though the Fourth Plan now advocates that there should be increasing shift towards a policy such that loans could be given on the security of growing crops.⁶⁰ Even if this policy could be implemented to give loans on the basis of producers of crops rather than owners of land the share croppers and smaller farmers may not benefit very greatly because their produce is not very much and their surplus has already been extracted by the landlord. In any case, the landless labour are totally excluded from any advantage.⁶¹

In another contradiction in policy, cooperatives have become an administrative fabrication and not a symbol of cooperation. Because of official policy, administration has actively encouraged the formation of cooperative societies and the number established is the sign of the target achieved. The whole dynamics of cooperation is

the by lost; cooperatives are treated as another branch of bureaucracy and their secretaryship another job. This bureaucratic approach has several consequences. As Dube points out:

"Notwithstanding the increase in the number of members and share capital, the cooperatives are still far from becoming a regular and vital part of the village people's life. A considerable section of the agriculturists views them as official organisation from outside; as something alien to the village and not quite dependable. Because they distrust the minor officials handling the affairs of the cooperatives the village people tend to distrust the societies as such too."⁶²

The All India Credit Review Committee further points out that the principle of open membership is not always effective for several cooperatives operate as closed shops for the benefit of one particular economic group or caste or faction.⁶³ This again happened because of the bureaucratic approach. Government aid came out in a big way to support the cooperative efforts. Thus, a cooperative society emerged not because there was need for it but because some group had fulfilled the minimum requirements to demand funds from government. In such a situation, those persons who could manipulate rules and could foresee clearly the role of the cooperative to their own benefit took hold of existing cooperatives or established new ones.

The result was that the cooperatives fell prey to the powerful vested interests who were not essentially cooperators but politicians and ambitious of exercising influence in more

than one sphere. At the state level, the state governments showed keen interest in maintaining hold on cooperative institutions with official chairman, nominated boards or departmental control over their working such that co-operators did not find any scope for initiative or any feeling of involvement in the working of the institutions with which they were associated. Concomitantly, with liberal financial support from government and wide network of societies spread throughout the state, the apex institutions became strong sources of political power and prestige. Political linkages were quickly forged and the leadership looked upon cooperatives more as source of power than anything else.

In concluding this section, let us not get away with the exaggerated impression that the role of credit co-operatives has been that of total failure. In spite of the arguments put forward above, there has been modest progress over a decade. As the Table below shows the grip of private money lenders has to some extent diminished and the share of the government and cooperatives in the total form credit has somewhat increased over a decade:

No wonder, therefore, that the cooperatives did not appear anxious to undertake promotional activities and help the small farmer who needed their services. The result has been that the cooperative has drifted away from the express purpose of helping the small farmer and has gradually been grasped by those whose stronghold it sought to loosen. Cooperative leadership became an independent source of village power because it provided - medium of contact between the village and the government. Thus, like the village Panchayat it combined both political as well as economic functions. In consequence cooperative resources have been controlled by those who count in the local resources have been controlled by those who count in the local power struggles and the cooperatives have been as much a part of local factional struggles as the panchayats. Not infrequently, the same faction controls both.

TABLE - I

SHARE OF VARIOUS CREDIT AGENCIES IN THE WHOLE FARM CREDIT

Credit Agency	Percentage 1950-51	Share 1961-62
Government & Cooperatives	6	15.4
Trades	6	7.2
Agricultural & Professional money lenders	70	62.0
Relatives	14	6.4
Landlords	2	0.9
Commercial Banks	Less than 1	Less than 1.0
Others	Balance	Balance

Source: All India Rural Credit Survey (1950-51) All India Rural Credit & Investment Survey (1961-62).

VI

THE NEW AGRICULTURAL STRATEGY AND THE GREEN REVOLUTION

The rural development policy during the fifties, as we have seen was focussed on providing such institutional support that could modernize the village community and make it self-sufficient. It was assumed that the major difficulty with the rural people was their backwardness and lethargy and once their attitudes were changed then everything else will follow. Thus, inspired by an idealistic image of the village fostered by the Gandhians, institutions

were planted in the rural soil in the hope of changing the minds and souls of the villagers and reordering the village community itself. Though everyone talked of increasing agricultural production but little direct and explicit effort was made in that direction. For, it was further assumed, that all these expected changes will on their own lead to increased production.

A consequence of these assumptions was the policy of spreading the resources as widely throughout the country as possible. Targets were set in terms of setting up new Community Blocks and achievements were, therefore, measured in terms of the numerical increase of the Blocks every quarter. Because each Block meant allocation of financial resources from the centre and the states, to that particular area (political)? demands for establishing more and more new blocks grew. Similar process worked for the coverage of the country by Panchayati Raj institutions and cooperatives.

In this period of national enthusiasm for the work being done in the rural areas, it was gradually becoming obvious that agricultural production was lagging behind. Food shortages were growing at the end of the second plan and the Third Plan was starting on a considerable backlog of food production and trends towards increasing

agricultural prices. It did not need much data to show that a crisis in agricultural production was approaching. Thus, the Third Plan was taking shape when it was not only being argued that agriculture needed much greater investment but also that "the rural sector could no longer be considered a welfare or social reform problem but rather an alternative to industry as a source of resources and growth."⁶⁷

This concern for agricultural production dominated the minds of the policy makers when the Ford Foundation presented its Report on "India's Food Crisis and Steps to Meet it" in 1959.⁶⁸ Several projections of food grain production were made and it was indicated that "unless food policy and programmes were reoriented, there would be a substantial gap between the production and the demand." The Government of India accepted in general the recommendations made in the 'Food Crisis' Report. The idea of Intensive Agricultural Development District as part of the recommendations of the above report was accepted and the Government subsequently invited the Ford Foundation to assist it in planning and implementing this programme. The recommendations were included in a report entitled "Suggestions for Ten Point Programme to Increase Food Production". The ten suggested points were:

1. Adequate farm credit, based on production potential, made readily accessible through strengthened cooperatives.
2. Adequate supplies of fertilizers, pesticides, improved seeds, improved farm implements and other essential production needs made readily accessible through strengthened service cooperatives.
3. Price incentives to participating cultivators through assured price agreements for rice, wheat and millets announced two years in advance.
4. Marketing arrangements and services which enable the cultivator to obtain the full market price for his marketed surplus.
5. Intensive educational, technical and farm management assistance made available in every village in every development block in the district.
6. Participation of all interested cultivators, both large and small in direct individual farm planning for increased food production.
7. Village planning for increased production and village improvement to include livestock improvement programmes. Strengthening of village organizations and village leadership.

8. A public works programme, using local labour to undertake drainage, bunding soil conservations minor irrigations, building of approach roads and other development works contributing directly to increased production.
9. Analysis and evaluation of the programme from its inception.
10. Coordination on a priority basis, by village, by block, district, state and centre, of all resources essential to mount and carry out the programme with maximum speed and effectiveness. ⁶⁸ 69

Government of India did not accept the suggestions regarding price incentives and did not implement the rural works programmes in direct conjunction with the IADP. But the general approach was accepted in the Third Plan which said:

".. the Intensive agricultural Development District Programme has been taken up, to begin with, in one district in each state. The programme is intended to contribute both to rapid increase in agricultural production in selected areas and to suggest new innovations and combinations of practices which may be of value elsewhere?

For the selection of districts, the following criteria were laid down:

1. The district should as far as possible have assured water supply.
2. It should have a minimum of natural hazards i. e. there should not be problems requiring long term attention, susceptibility to floods, drainage problems, acute soil conservation problem etc.
3. It should as far as possible have well developed village institutions like co-operatives and panchayats.
4. It should have maximum potentialities for increasing agricultural production within a comparatively short time. ⁷⁰

The programme that was accepted was basically administrative in character. It entailed a larger bureaucratic organization under the leadership of the District Collector. Technical officers were added and a Project Officer essentially with agricultural service background was appointed to coordinate the work of the project in each district. A District Coordinating Committee was also established with the Collector as the Chairman. The major change was the reduction of the work load of the Village Level Worker who was now asked to look after the basic structure of the district administration to suit lesser number of villages. Efforts at changing the needs of the new project proved futile and the Project administration was planted on the already existing apparatus of district administration. ⁷⁰¹

This approach of selecting few areas for concentrated attention received added strength when Mr. C. Subramaniam, the Food Minister announced his new agricultural strategy in 1965. The new agricultural strategy was based on the use of new seeds and application of technological advances in areas which were assured of irrigation. Mr. Subramaniam argued that the traditional varieties of seeds had little potentiality of higher yields and extensive use of high yielding varieties imported from Mexico and Taiwan must be made. It was also argued that the performance of the technology would be improved considerably if and if only applied to irrigated areas. Therefore, to maximise the benefits from technological advances, the agricultural Ministry sought for certain concessions in the ideological goals that were focussed in bringing greater social justice in the rural sector. It pointed out that the All India coverage of Community Development Programme tended to dilute scarce resources below the critical level necessary for increased agricultural production. Much better results could follow if these inputs were concentrated in the 22% of the cultivable area where irrigation facilities were available. It was further argued that very high growth of output in this area would push up the overall rate of growth of agricultural production to a reasonably high level.

The so-called Green Revolution was proclaimed by the Government of India around 1969 after this strategy had been put into operation. The increase recorded in food production was no doubt impressive. The output of foodgrains increased from 89 million tonnes in 1964-65 which was the best year before the so called revolution, to 100 million tonnes in 1969-70. Still more impressive was the increase in the output of wheat, the cereal that responded most to the new agricultural strategy. During the six years from 1964-65 to 1970-71 wheat production increased at a compound rate of about 14 per cent per annum.⁷²

The reason why it was necessary to refer to Green Revolution as "so-called" was because doubts have been raised about the justification of calling increases in food grains output of this magnitude as revolution. It is widely conceded that changes in output have occurred but more empirical data is now showing that these changes are not extensive and far reaching. The long term overall trend growth of food production improved only from 3.05 to 3.26 per cent per annum when the output increased between 1967-68 and 1970-71. No spectacular results were also achieved when individual crops (except wheat) are taken into account.⁷³ However, the important point seems to be that significant changes did occur in selected

areas if not in the total country. For our purposes in this paper it is important to analyse the consequences of the approach towards Green Revolution on total policies of rural development.

With the primary focus on increasing agricultural production, the new strategy departed from the ideological goals of the Indian agricultural policy. The whole idea of Intensive Agricultural District Programme and the Higher Yielding Variety Programme was to concentrate only on certain favoured areas in the country. This favour was extended to only those areas in the country which boasted of irrigation facilities. This automatically restricted the choice to about 22% of the cultivable area. The result of such concentration was diversion of resources from many other programmes to these efforts and one rapidly saw the withdrawal of funds from the Community Development and Panchayati Raj schemes. In fact, many Chief Ministers began to talk of giving up these programmes totally. Most states, however, have reduced their outlay on the community development programmes to levels sufficient only for staff maintenance. To a great extent the new strategy signalled a considerable dilution of the earlier approach of increasing agricultural production by giving social incentives to the farmer through far reaching institutional changes. The urge to look for a "progressive

farmer who would be motivated by resource concentration and price incentive was a tacit admission by the leadership that they had failed to make the small producer "an effective vector of economic progress through far reaching institutional reforms."⁷⁴

Significant political consequences emerged from the acceptance of the new agricultural strategy. For one thing, concentration of resources in selected areas could not be implemented without generating political competition for extending and enlarging these areas. The politicians in the Panchayati Raj had already shown their capacity to mobilize political support to gain local advantages. Those not in areas of intensive development, therefore, resented the discriminatory practices, however economically sound they appeared to be. Consequently the districts in the Intensive agricultural District Programme were not selected purely on the basis of conditions laid down by the Government of India.⁷⁵ The plea of the Central Government to concentrate resources only in selected areas to maximise benefits from high yielding varieties also suffered a further set back. The state leadership urged an expansion in the programme in order to satisfy the local pressures and to acquire greater central support in terms of inputs etc. The result was the initiation of a less intensive package programme - confined to a single crop - the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme

covering an additional 114 districts.⁷⁶ Thus, the new agricultural strategy enunciated on purely economic grounds was diluted to a certain extent and also built in disparities within the rural sector. In terms of inputs etc., therefore, some areas stood to much greater advantage than others.

Within the rural community, also it became soon obvious that only the more affluent group could take advantage of the new inputs.⁷⁷ On the total country perspective, it was natural that the pattern of the flow of advantages would depend upon the pattern of agrarian structure. Our data on land holdings shows that 21% owned less than 0.4 hectare per household. 72% of the agricultural holdings were below 2 hectares in area and accounted only for 20% of the agricultural land. At the other end of the scale, holdings above 8 hectares in the area accounted for 5% of the total number of holdings and 36% of the total land. Apart from this, it was estimated that one quarter of agricultural land was under tenancy and over 80% of the tenancies were insecure.⁷⁸ Such steep inequalities limited the opportunities of using modern techniques and inputs because they required financial resources to invest in assets. Obviously, the capacity of the larger farm to invest or to borrow money was much greater than the smaller farm.

But this does not mean that the small farms did not take advantage of and adopt the new technology.⁷⁹ For about 14 million out of a total of 22.7 million irrigated farms, ^{are small,} i.e. 61% are small while less than a million farms or about 4.35 per cent are large. Consequently, other things being equal, the small farms would constitute about 61% of the adopter farms while the larger farms would constitute only about 4.35%. If irrigation is the main factor affecting the applicability of the new technology and new varieties, then within the irrigated areas, the smaller farms would predominate in the adoption of the new programme.⁸⁰ The point that emerges from this discussion is that within irrigated lands smaller farms have also quickly adopted the new technology. However, this has little meaning because, small farms are spread only in 29.01% of the irrigated area of land. Thus, in the total perspective impact on the small farms is minimal. Together with this, their adoption of the new technology is limited by the extent to which they can mobilize resources in order to create permanent assets on their farms. This limitation is further accentuated by the fact that the farmer's incentive is dampened because of their being share croppers or tenants thus reducing their risk taking capacity.⁸¹

Thus, by and large, green revolution has been confined to limited areas with irrigation facilities and to those farmers who have the resources or access to institutional finance. Most small farmers, who lack resources of their own or have no access to institutional finance are outside the mainstream of green revolution.⁸²

UNSOLVED PROBLEMS: CONCERN FOR THE SMALL FARMER

Considerations of equality and justice and greater production have prompted the Government to initiate several new programmes specifically for the weaker sections of the rural society during the Fourth Five Year Plan.⁸³ In pursuance of this objective, the Plan provided for two sets of projects. One was for small but potentially viable farmers and the other for marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. The small farmers were taken to be those who, with the help of irrigation, provision of credit, supplies and marketing and application of new technology, could be made viable. A limit of one to three hectares of land holding was generally adopted in identifying such farmers. Farmers with land holdings below this limit were classified as marginal farmers.

Under the programme, two new agencies Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Agency (MFALA) were initiated around 1970. These Agencies are incorporated in the Societies Registration Act and work at the District Level. Each agency has a small membership consisting mainly of the

representations of the institutional agencies and concerned district officers. The District Collector works as the Chairman of the agency. While the Fourth Plan visualised 45 SFDA and 40 MFAL projects, the number of projects actually started were 46 and 41 respectively. These 87 projects are spread over 97 districts, in part or in full.⁸³

The programme has been in operation only from 1971-72 and its evaluation has been scarce. However, a report of the Planning Commission points out that the performance has been considerably uneven.⁸⁴ Some states have done better than others and four states of Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh account for 54% of total production credit advanced in all projects areas throughout the country. Similar unevenness is with regard to long term credit advanced. It has been found that policies have not been conducive to long term finance so necessary for developing more permanent assets in the farms.⁸⁵ It has further been pointed out that the main reason of their ineffectiveness has been their being routed through the existing rural institutions which act as 'instruments in the hands of the power group.'⁸⁶

CONCLUSIONS

Policies towards rural development have gradually emerged over the last Four Five Year Plans. At no period of time has there been a radical shift from what was happening before. More often than not old programmes have been allowed to languish when new ones are taken up. Usually, there is multiplicity of policy objectives with operational strategies presenting sometimes confusing if not contradictory picture at a particular point of time.

Thus, the policy makers began with three policy objectives viz., productivity, social justice and the creation of a self-sufficient village. In the beginning of the First Plan it was assumed that if the social impediments to agricultural production were removed then output would increase which in turn, through measures of distributive justice, will lead to greater prosperity in the rural areas. Within the scope of this goal, the ideal of village self-sufficiency was also injected which assumed that external influences on village life were harmful and the rural folk should have the capability to maintain their autonomy.

Improving land relations was the foremost effort of transforming the agrarian structure. Together with this Community Development and National Extension Service became the major planks of rural development. Later in 1959,

the scheme of Panchayati Raj was introduced to generate greater support of the people for new programmes of agricultural production. Attempts in these schemes were concentrated on spreading the message of democracy and freedom throughout the country and creating a climate that would induce farmers towards greater productivity. Co-operative institutions were also developed in order to loosen the clutches of the landlord or the money lender and make the small farmer a viable unit of increased agricultural production.

However, looking at the problem of increasing agricultural production in this way did not produce significant results. By 1960 it was obvious that a food crisis was approaching. Without giving up the old programmes, a new orientation was given to the agricultural development programme. It was felt that instead of spreading the men and material thinly all over the country, efforts should be concentrated on areas with a favourable resource base and a potential of growth. The Intensive Agricultural Development Programme was a result of this shift in emphasis. The programme was launched in 1960-61 and was supplemented by the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme. These Programmes were followed by the High Yielding Variety Programmes. It was being assumed by the policy makers that production first philosophy had so far been neglected and the Green Revolution was the way towards rural prosperity. Considerations of distributive justice could follow once the cake had been enlarged.

However, now that both the promise and the consequence of the Green Revolution are being better understood, we are right back where we started. Rural prosperity has not been widespread and the weaker sections have been deprived of the benefits of development. Not only this, more and more evidence is emerging to show that the gap between the big and the small farmer is widening^{and} a new class of capitalist farmer is growing transforming the semi-feudal character of the rural scene.⁸⁷ Consequently specific programmes to help the underprivileged are being enunciated ~~a new~~.

Thus, the significant trend that emerges is that the smaller farmer, rural labour and other weaker sections have not received sufficient support to raise their levels of living. In other words if they were on the periphery of developments earlier, they have continued to be so even today. However, politically they are no more a docile group. Democracy and Panchayati Raj have made a signal contribution in raising their political awareness. Consciousness of injustice has increased and this is what has led to the rise of agrarian tensions. Entry of political parties into the rural areas may lead to consolidation of such forces to hasten the pace of change.

Vested interests already entrenched in the rural society and the rising new agricultural classes have been mainly responsible for insulating the poor from the benefits

of development. It has not been possible for the government to penetrate this barrier. A recent study best summarizes the rule of the rural elite in this regard.

"The rural elite, in a way, functions as agents. However, this elite is not neutral or impartial and has a deep vested interest in programmes of the government. It reacts to government programmes in two ways. If the programmes support its interests, it takes the maximum advantage of such programmes. If the programmes are meant for the benefit of the general masses and not essentially for the elites own benefit, or if the programmes are even likely to influence the socio-economic structure, then it reacts in one or more of the five following ways:

1. It uses its political lines with higher levels either to scuttle the programme at the higher levels or to distort or twist the objectives of the programme as well as procedures for implementation in such a way that the ultimate benefit flows towards it.
2. If it fails to achieve this, it creates impediments in the legitimate working of the administrative machinery and/or tries to bribe the machinery.
3. It adopts an indifferent and passive attitude towards the programme and does not cooperate with the implementing machinery, which it knows has no real contact with the masses and hence cannot achieve much by itself.
4. It pays lip service to the cause and gives a very temporary, artificial support to the programme, which is conveniently forgotten as soon as the officials depart from the village.
5. As a last resort, it directly or indirectly exercises its economic power, its power derived out of the patronage it is able to extend to others, and its other's power to intimidate them in not accepting the government programme.

The end result of all this is that while pockets of development and progress are seen at the level of the elite, little change takes place at the societal level.

This failure to reach the poor, it seems to me emerges from the close linkage of rural politicians with state and national level leadership which determines the rural policies. It has already been pointed out that the Panchayati Raj leadership which is at best 'neo-traditional' has forged links with the state leadership and acts as vote banks for the political decision-makers in the state legislative assemblies. Naturally it is difficult for these decision-makers to go against the people who are their sources of support and power. At the Central level, the ranks of the old leadership of the independence movement which had no landed interests but had 'promises to keep' is getting thinner and new leadership coming to the Parliament identifies more with the new rising agricultural class for support. The result is that policies to reach the society at large become mere rhetoric and are articulated in every plan or Budget speech to project and build an image of the policy making elite which the masses will accept.

This weakness in intentions has been compounded by the increasing use of the existing administrative structure to implement change. Paradoxically, this was considered the greatest impediment to change but each plan strengthened it and increasingly relied on it for its own success. It was quickly forgotten that the members of the civil services

were themselves a privileged group and would readily identify with those who would help them to keep up their privilege. Lack of rural orientation helped to build further biases in programme administration. Increasing fulfilment of developmental objectives tends to bring changes in the administrative roles themselves and thus unfavourable changes are bound to be resisted.

Apart from this, adoption of the bureaucratic strategy brought with it its own logic. Greater concern was expressed for the apparatus, numerical targets and filing of returns. This was easier to do hence the developmental scene has been dominated by an impressive increase in outlay of men and finance. Seriousness about a project was marked by the speed with which an organisation could be set up and money could be spent. Thus, success became a game of numbers.

In this situation what I am trying to emphasize is that considering the social political forces at work, what was forgotten was the role of politics and political ideology in the whole process of rural development. Questions of rural development seem to have political not administrative answers. Those against whom policies are directed, do not give up their power just because government has issued a decree. In fact they will use every

method to see that these policies are distorted or completely sabotaged. In such a situation, forces and pressures have to be built up from below to initiate changes. At the present juncture, political mobilization of rural underprivileged seems to be the only answer. Thus the argument is that it is the organizations of the unemployed, the landless, the crop sharers and insecure tenants into militant unions that can prevent the benefits to be pocketed by contractors, rich farmers and petty bureaucrats through whom they are channelled.⁸⁹

Political mobilization, is however, difficult to achieve. Unionization of the poor is not easy. It still continues to present the question of socio-political feasibility. However, the fact still remains that if drastic changes in institutional arrangements are not initiated soon and developmental benefits are not widely dispersed then the very stability of the society is at stake.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a detailed exposition of this approach see Inayatullah "A Proposed Conceptual Framework for Study of Approaches to Rural Development in Asia", Asian Centre for Development Administration, Kuala Lumpur, 1974. (Mimeo)
2. Iqbal Narain and Arvind Sharma, "Balance of Administrative Authority in a Dual Polity: The Case of Food Administration in India", Indian Journal of Public Administration, XVI, (3) July-September, 1970, pp. 377-378.
3. Rajni Kothari, Politics in India (Little Brown, Boston, 1970) esp. pp. 160-74.
4. First Five Year Plan, p. 253
5. In another context, B. S. Minhas, a former member of the Planning Commission comments on the approval of the Draft Fifth Plan by the National Development Council, "How right was the Chief Minister who is reported to have said at this meeting that economists may differ but 'we always approve the Plan.' -- The mood was -- we will do it. But do not ask what is it that is to be done, and how it will be done", B. S. Minhas, Planning and the Poor, (S. Chand, New Delhi, 1974) p. XVI.
6. See D. G. Mandlebaun, Society in India, (Berkley, University of California Press, 1970) esp. Chapter I.
7. In a study of the political elite of Bihar, for example, it has been found that the political decision-makers are overwhelmingly rural in their origin and that they largely belong to the prosperous land owning families in the state. See Shashishekar Jha, Political Elite in Bihar (Vora & Co. Bombay, 1972) pp. 132-205.
8. See George Rosen, Democracy and Economic Change (Berkeley, University of California Press 1967) p. 73; Rutna Dutta, The Party Representative in Fourth Lok Sabha, Economic and Political Weekly, IV, Nos. 1-2, January, 1969.
9. S. S. Khera: District Administration in India, (Bombay, Asia, 1964) esp. Chapter I.
10. Quoted in D. C. Potter, Government in Rural India, (London, G. Bell and Sons, 1964) p. 4.
11. See Hugh Tinker, Structure of the British Imperial Heritage in R. Braibanti (ed.) Asian Bureaucratic System Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition (Durham, Duke U. Press 1966).

12. See David C. Potter, Bureaucratic Change in India in R. Braibanti (ed) Asian Bureaucratic Systems, op.cit.
13. R. Braibanti, Reflections on Bureaucratic Reform in India in R. Braibanti & J. J. Spengler, Administration & Economic Development in India (Durham, Duke University Press, 1963)
14. S. K. Chettur, The Steel Frame and I, (Bombay, Asia, 1962).
15. David Potter, Bureaucratic Change in India, op.cit.
16. Ibid.
17. R. Braibanti, Reflections on Bureaucratic Reform in India, in R. Braibanti & J. J. Spengler (ed.) op.cit.
18. Administrative Reform Commission: Study Team on District Administration (Delhi, Government of India, 1966), p. 209.
19. Hugh Tinker, Structure of the British Imperial Heritage, op.cit.
20. R. Braibanti, 'Conspicuous' in Braibanti (ed.) Asian Bureaucratic System, op.cit. p. 661
21. R. Braibanti, The Relevance of Political Science to the Study of underdeveloped Areas in Braibanti & Spengler (ed) Tradition, Values and Socio-Economic Development (Durham, Duke University Press, 1961) p. 171.
22. Jawahar Lal Nehru, Autobiography (London, Neuthen rev. ed. 1953) p. 282.
23. "Building up New India", Kurukshetra, (Delhi, Government of India, 1967 rev. ed.) P. 6.
24. G. B. Pant, The Right Approach to people, Kurukshetra, op.cit. p. 59.
25. Ibid., p. 60.
26. Government of India: Important Letters, 1955.
27. Howard Beers, Relationship among Workers in C. D. Blocks, (Mussoorie, NICD, 1962) See also K. Seshadri Coordination of Development Programmes, Indian Journal of Public Administration, XIII, 1, 1966, also see Taylor, Hasminger et. al. op.cit. pp. 555-83.

28. See Also Report of a Community Development Mission in India, U.N. Commission for Technical Assistance, issued by Government of India, 1959, M.L. Wilson: Community Development Programme in India COPP, G.O.I., July 1956.
29. Carl Taylor, A Critical Analysis of India's C.D. Programme, (COPP, Government of India, 1956) esp. pp. 1-8.
30. Ibid.
31. S.C. Dube, 'India's Villages' (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 100.
32. Evaluation Report on Working of Community Projects and NES Blocks, Vol. I, (COT, April 1957) pp. 17-21.
33. Ibid.
34. Dube, op. cit.
35. P.C. Mathur has used the term 'escalator model' to sum up this description. See his 'Sociological Dimensions of Panchayati Raj', Indian Journal of Public Administration, XI, 1964, pp. 58-72.
36. The Maharashtra Report on Democratic Decentralization emphasized that "...The district body is the best operative unit of local administration as it alone will be capable of providing the requisite resources, necessary administrative and technical personnel and equipment required for a properly coordinated development of the district. In view of this, we conclude that if decentralization is to be real and effective, it would be imperative to establish a strong executive body at the district level." See Report of the Committee on Democratic Decentralization, (Cooperation and Rural Development Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1961), pp. 75-76.
37. Third Five Year Plan, Government of India, New Delhi, 1961, p. 338.
38. See, for example, C.P. Bhambhani Official-non-official Relationship in Panchayati Raj, Indian Journal of Political Science, XVIII, 3, July-September, 1967, pp. 132-42. T.N. Chaturvedi 'Tensions in Panchayati Raj: Relations between officials and non-officials', Economic Weekly, 16(22) May 30, 1964, pp. 921-24. Also, Iqbal Narain, "Administrative Challenge in Panchayati Raj", Indian Journal of Public Administration, XII, 3, 1966, pp. 564-78.

39. In particular see, Kuldeep Mathur, Bureaucratic Response to Development (Delhi, National, 1972).
40. For further details see, V. Nath "The Technical Departments under Panchayati Raj", Indian Journal of Public Administration, VIII, 4, 1962, pp. 512-21.
41. See S.N. Dubey, "Organizational Analysis of Panchayati Raj", Indian Journal of Public Administration, XVIII, 2 1972, esp., pp. 262-63.
42. Ram K. Vepa, "Panchayat Samiti: An Appraisal" Kurukshetra, Vol. 9, June 1960.
43. Dubey, op. cit.
44. In this context see also: Iqbal Narain, "Administrative Challenges to Panchayati Raj", op. cit.
45. Norman K. Nicholson, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and the Political Economy of Village India (Occasional Papers, Cornell University, 1973), p. 53.
46. K.D. Gangrade, Emerging Patterns of Leadership (Delhi, Rachna Publications, 1974).
47. V.M. Sirsikar, The Rural Elite in a Developing Society, (Orient Longmans, Delhi, 1970).
48. M.V. Mathur, et. al. Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, (Delhi, Inpex, 1966); G.R. Reddy "Social Composition of Panchayati Raj: Background of Political Executives in Andhra", Economic & Political Weekly, XI, 58, December 23, 1967.
49. P.C. Mathur, Political Corollaries of Panchayati Raj in M.V. Mathur & Iqbal Narain, Panchayati Raj, Planning & Democracy (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1969), pp. 331-41.
50. See M.V. Mathur et. al. Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, op. cit. Also, See Iqbal Narain "Democratic Decentralization: The Idea, the Image and the Reality", Indian Journal of Public Administration, IX, 1, 1963, esp. pp. 23-30.
51. The surfacing of severe political dissensions in the villages after the introduction of Panchayati Raj has disturbed many a image of consensus based village society. See, S.H. Rudolph: Conflict & Consensus in Indian Politics, World Politics, XIII, 3, April, 1961, pp. 385-99. Also see, F.G. Bailey, Decisions by Consensus in Councils and Committees: With special reference to village and local Government in India, in Political Systems and the Distribution of Power, ed. by Michael Banton (London, Tavistock Publications, 1965).

52. "Sociological Dimensions of Panchayati Raj", op.cit. Jaya Prakash Narain has been the strongest advocate of partyless panchayati raj. See, his A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity (Serva Seva Sangh Prakashan, Kashi, 1959). See, also a response from W.H. Morris Jones The Unhappy Utopia - J.P. in Wonderland, Economic Weekly, June 25, 1960.
53. Daniel Thorner says, "As a whole, the first half century of cooperation in India (1904-54) has been written off as failure". See his Agricultural Cooperatives in India (Bombay, Asia Publishing, 1964) P.1.
54. First Five Year Plan, p.164.
55. For excellent surveys of rural credit see, All India Rural Credit Survey (Reserve Bank of India, Bombay, 1954) and Report of the All India Rural Credit Review Committee (Reserve Bank of India, Bombay, 1969).
56. See, L.K. Sen & Prodipto Roy: Awareness of Community Development in Village India (NICD, Hyderabad, 1966) and F.C. Fliegel, Prodipto Roy, L.K. Sen & J.C. Kivini: Agricultural Innovations in Indian Villages (NICD, Hyderabad, 1968) The First mentioned study was conducted in 368 villages and the other in 108.
57. All India Rural Credit Review Committee, op.cit. p.160
58. Waheeduddin Khan and R.N. Tripathy: Cooperatives and the Weaker Sections, in Papers and Proceedings of the Workshop-cum-Seminar on Rural Institutions and Agricultural Development, ed. by W. Khan (NICD, Hyderabad, 1972, pp.196-200).
59. The All India Rural Credit Survey had recommended that the Cooperatives were to make advances to the cultivators as producers of crops (not as owners of land). The loans were to be given on the basis that a crop was anticipated and the amounts of the loans were to be related to the estimated outlay of raising crop. The recoveries were to be made as and when the crop was sold from the proceeds of the sale. See, All India Rural Credit Survey. The General Report, pp.433 and 452-53.
60. Gunnar Myrdal: Asian Drama (London, Penguin Books, 1968), pp.1335-36.
61. See, Guy Hunter: Modernizing Peasant Societies (OUP, London 1969), p.157.
62. S.C. Dube, India's Changing Villages: Human Factors in Community Development (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), pp.66-67.

63. All India Credit Review Committee, op.cit. p.174
64. Daniel Thorner, Agricultural Cooperatives in India: A Field Report, (Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1962), p.3
65. Norman K. Nicholson, Panchayati Raj, Rural Development and the Political Economy of Village India, (Cornell University Occasional Papers, 1973), pp.56-57.
66. Norman K. Nicholson, Rural Development Policy in India: Elite Differentiation and Decision Making Process (North Illinois University, Dekalb, Illinois) (undated MSS. This paper provides valuable data on the emergence of the policy on Intensive Agricultural Development Projects in India.
67. See, Modernizing Indian Agriculture: Report on the Intensive Agricultural District Programme 1960-68, Vol.I (Government of India, Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Food & Agriculture, Community Development & Cooperation, New Delhi, 1969).
68. Ibid., pp.3-4.
69. Ibid., p.5.
70. Ford Foundation teams, on the basis of evaluation reports of two districts had suggested changes in the structure of administration and doing away with the pre-eminent role of the collector. These suggestions were not accepted. See, Nicholson: Rural Development Policy in India, op.cit.
71. See, Bandhudas Sen: The Green Revolution in India: A Perspective (New Delhi, Wiley Eastern Private Ltd., 1974).
72. Wolf Ladgansky, How Green is the Green Revolution, Economic & Political Weekly, December 29, 1973.
73. See Francine Frankel: "India's new Strategy of Agricultural Development", Journal of Asian Studies, XXVIII, 4, August 1969, pp.493-710.
74. Modernizing Indian Agriculture, op.cit. p.5.
75. Ibid. p.7.
76. Wolf Ladgansky, 'India's Green Revolution', op.cit. p.7.
77. See, Indian Agriculture in Brief Thirteenth ed. (Government of India, Delhi, 1974).

78. Small Farm has been defined as being less than 5 acres. The Fourth Plan Document defines a small holder as one with 2 hectares or less of land. See Fourth Five Year Plan, p.149.
79. See Bandhudas Sen, op.cit.
80. See Francine Frankel, India's Green Revolution Economic Gains and Political Costs, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.219-26. The book also been recognition by the Government that "the small farmers have not benefitted in proportion either to their numbers or their needs from the various programmes of rural development which have been under implementation during the three Plans". See Report of the all India Rural Credit Review Committee (Bombay: Reserve Bank of India, 1969), p.537.
81. See, for example, "The improved seeds pay only if the water supply is assured in both quantity and timing, that cuts out at least four-fifths of India's farm land. For the lucky farmers on the remaining land (not one-fifth but up to one-third of India's farmers- on average irrigated holdings are smaller than large inputs of fertilizers. If a man must finance these with money lender credit at 35 per cent or pay half his crop to the landlord he will not use the new seeds. So only the 20-25 per cent of farmers big enough to do without money lender credit benefit. For these - 20-25 per cent or one-third i.e. at most 1 in 12 farmers - the New strategy is potentially a real 'green revolution'." Michael Lipton, India's Agricultural Performance. Achievements, Distortions and Ideologies in Comparative Experience of Agricultural Development in Developing Countries of Asia and the Far East since World War II (Indian Society of Agricultural Economics, Bombay, 1972) p.112.
82. One of the major objectives of the Fourth Plan was to enable the small and marginal farmers and agricultural labour "to participate in the process of development and share its benefits". See, Fourth Five Year Plan 1969-73 (Government of India, New Delhi, 1969), p.16.
83. Report of the Steering Group on Fifth Five Year Plan relating to Agriculture, Irrigation and Allied Sectors (Planning Commission, Government of India, New Delhi, 1973) pp. 378-432 (mimeo).
84. Ibid.

85. See, R.M. Mohan Rau & P. Jagannadha P. Acharlu, Small Farmer and Long Term Finance, Economic & Political Weekly, VI, 26 June 24, 1972, A83-85. See, also N.S. Jodha: "Special Programmes for Rural Poor", Economic & Political Weekly, VIII, March 31, 1973.
86. N.S. Jodha, 'Special Programmes for the Rural Poor: Constraining Framework', op.cit.
87. See the arguments in:
Ashok Rudra, In Search of the Capitalist Farmer, Economic & Political Weekly, V 26, June 27, 1970, A85-87, and U. Patnaik, Capitalist Development in Agriculture - A note, Economic and Political Weekly, VI, 39, September 25, 1971, A123-130.
88. V.R. Gaikwad, et.al. Rural Social Structure and Communication in Indian Village, (Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, 1973.)
89. See also, Raj Krishna, Unemployment in India, Economic & Political Weekly, VIII, March 3, 1973, pp.475-84.

